

BIG SAGEBRUSH

Artemisia tridentata Nutt.

Plant Symbol = ARTR2

Contributed by: USDA NRCS Plant Materials Program



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Uses

Livestock: The leaves are high in protein but the bitter resinous taste prevents extensive grazing by cattle. Sheep will eat young plants and new growth readily when other forages are dry. They will also make considerable use of the plant in the winter.

Wildlife: Sage grouse are the heaviest users of sagebrush. As much as 70 to 75 percent of their diet is made up of foliage and flower clusters of the plant. Antelope eat substantial amounts of sagebrush throughout the year, and mule deer feed heavily on the plant during late fall, winter, and spring, particularly if other foods are covered with snow. Sharp-tailed grouse, jackrabbits, elk, and many species of small mammals eat sagebrush sparingly during various times of the year. Sagebrush provides nesting cover for sage grouse, and to a lesser extent pheasants and several species of prairie sparrows. It provides loafing and escape cover for sage grouse, chukar, sharp tailed grouse, gray (Hungarian) partridge, pheasants, quail, jackrabbits, and deer.

Status

Please consult the PLANTS Web site and your State Department of Natural Resources for this plant's current status (e.g. threatened or endangered species, state noxious status, and wetland indicator values).

Weediness

This plant may become weedy or invasive in some regions or habitats and may displace desirable vegetation if not properly managed. Please consult with your local NRCS Field Office, Cooperative Extension Service office, or state natural resource or agriculture department regarding its status and use. Weed information is also available from the PLANTS Web site at plants.usda.gov.

Description

Big sagebrush and its subspecies, are tall, rounded, U.S. native shrubs with short branched, woody trunks. The height is normally about 4 feet, but varies from 2 feet in arid conditions to as high as 15 feet on favorable sites. The winter persistent leaves are wedge to fan-shaped and are usually three-lobed at tips. They are strongly aromatic. Buds form about June with flowering and seed formation in the fall.

Adaptation and Distribution

Big sagebrush is drought tolerant but cannot stand excessive sub-moisture. It grows on moderately shallow to deep, well drained, sandy to silt loam soils of neutral to slightly alkaline reaction. Big sagebrush occurs on practically all range except meadows and at high elevations.

Big sagebrush is distributed throughout the western United States. For a current distribution map, please consult the Plant Profile page for this species on the PLANTS Website.

Establishment

This has not been a factor to date since its value hasn't been considered great enough. Control has been more important. It is a good seed producer and increases rapidly when soil is disturbed in its natural habitat. Livestock over-grazing can also promote the increase of big sagebrush populations.

Management

Control is accomplished by chemical sprays, fire, riling, chaining, and beating. Good range management of deep-rooted perennial grasses is a control measure.

Pests and Potential Problems

This plant has no serious pests.

Cultivars, Improved, and Selected Materials (and area of origin)

None recommended at this time.

Control

Please contact your local agricultural extension specialist or county weed specialist to learn what works best in your area and how to use it safely. Always read label and safety instructions for each control method. Trade names and control measures appear in this document only to provide specific information. USDA, NRCS does not guarantee or warranty the products and control methods named, and other products may be equally effective.

Prepared By & Species Coordinator: *USDA NRCS Plant Materials Program*

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For more information about this and other plants, please contact your local NRCS field office or Conservation District, and visit the PLANTS Web site <<http://plants.usda.gov>> or the Plant Materials Program Web site <<http://Plant-Materials.nrcs.usda.gov>>

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